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ARMSTRONG-SOVIETS
BY BARTON REPPERT

WASHINGTON (AP) -- WHEN SEN. WILLIAM L. ARMSTRONG CALLED A PRESS BRIEFING TO DISCUSS WAYS OF KEEPING SENSITIVE MATERIAL FROM THE SOVIET UNION, HE HAD NO IDEA HE WOULD END UP IN AN IMPROMPTU DEBATE WITH A SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL THERE TAKING NOTES.

BUT THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED WEDNESDAY IN AN EPISODE THAT ILLUSTRATES WHAT U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE DESCRIBED AS A STEPPED-UP EFFORT BY THE SOVIETS AND OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES TO FIELD INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVES ON CAPITOL HILL, GENERALLY IN THE GUISE OF DIPLOMATS OR JOURNALISTS.

UNLIKE SOME SOVIET BLOC AGENTS WHO SLIP QUIETLY INTO COMMITTEE HEARINGS AND TRY TO REMAIN INCONSPICUOUS, SCIENCE ATTACHE IGOR M. MAKAROV MADE A POINT OF INTRODUCING HIMSELF AT THE BRIEFING IN ARMSTRONG'S OFFICE.

IT CAUGHT THE SENATOR BY SURPRISE.

''YOU'RE WELCOME TO SIT IN ON THIS, ALTHOUGH YOU MAY NOT LIKE WHAT YOU HEAR,'' ARMSTRONG, R-COLO., TOLD MAKAROV.

MAKAROV REPLIED BLUNTLY THAT ATTENDING THE BRIEFING WAS ''ONE OF THE UNPLEASANT DUTIES I MUST HANDLE HERE.''

THE EMBASSY OFFICIAL SAT STONY-FACED -- TAKING NOTES BUT OCCASIONALLY STARING AT THE CEILING -- AS ARMSTRONG CALLED FOR A THOROUGH RE-EVALUATION OF U.S. POLICY ON TRADE WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER SOVIET-BLOC COUNTRIES.

''OUR PRESENT TRADE POLICY IS SERIOUSLY COMPROMISING U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS, IMPOSING A NEEDLESS DEFENSE BUDGET BURDEN ON THE UNITED STATES, AND IS ASSISTING THE SOVIET UNION IN PERPETRATING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ON A PERFECTLY STUPENDOUS SCALE,'' HE TOLD REPORTERS.

IF IT WERE NOT FOR ''NEEDLESS TRADE POLICIES'' DURING THE 1970S, ARMSTRONG ASSERTED, ''WE LIKELY WOULDN'T NEED THE MX MISSILE OR THE B-1 BOMBER TO COUNTER SOVIET WEAPONS WE HELPED THE RUSSIANS BUILD.''

(over)

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